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CLUB WORK DEVELOPS SELF-RELIANCE

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U. S. Department of Agriculture

A radio talk by G. L. Herrington, Boys' Club Leader, Knoxville, Tennessee, delivered in the 4-H club program, National Farm and Home Hour, Saturday, June 2, 1932, and broadcast by a network of 58 associate NBC radio stations.

The advantages of club work are available to all types of farm boys and girls regardless of their varying farm and home conditions. Among the members are boys and girls from the leading and most prosperous farms and farm homes. A great majority, of course, are from the average farm home to be found throughout the country. But many are sons and daughters of tenant farmers, and some live in remote rural communities where they know no other opportunities or sources of encouragement outside of club work.

We want the leading and most capable boys and girls in club work. They derive a valuable training and take greater advantage of their opportunities. We are proud of the records made by the rank and file of members, but by no means will we give less attention to those whose farm and home conditions have denied them many advantages.

Many a lad enters club work at the age of 10 to 13 years with no idea of what he could do. He agrees to follow to the best of his ability the instructions of his county agent in growing a crop or caring for livestock. It is his first lesson in the value of improved methods or the value of purebred livestock and poultry. At the close of the year he exhibits his products at the fair or club show, turns in his record, and wins recognition that greatly surprises himself and other members of his family.

The difficult first year behind him, he begins the second year with more confidence in his ability to do things. He gets more encouragement from his mother and less opposition from his father. Step by step he advances a little each year until he has made a valuable contribution to the community and to himself. Other club members and associates recognize his persistent efforts and while he may not possess many of the so-called qualities of leadership, others respect and appreciate him for having accomplished something worthwhile.

This same lad may find it to be a great ordeal to begin entering social activities of club work. At the first program of games and sports, or at the first camp, he feels that the eyes of everyone are fixed critically upon him, but when all are too busy playing the game to be aware of his timidity, it soon wears off. He learns to meet and mingle with other boys and girls and to appreciate them more.

He has been living close to nature all of his life, but knows very little about nature. The county agent takes the club on a nature study tour, teaching them the names of plants, trees, birds, and insects. The boys learn the economic as well as the aesthetic value of birds and learn to protect birds rather than destroy them. They learn of the destruction worked by forest fires and soil erosion and gain a desire to do something to control these elemental forces.

In the club program many club members learn for the first time the value of attractive and liveable homes, beautiful home surroundings and that culture is within reach of every normal person. They are drilled on the value of good

health habits and learn to play the game of good health in their daily routine.

Because of the club member's greater knowledge of things all about him; a new knowledge that he has ability to do things skillfully, to win in a contest when he has less than an even chance, he comes thru it with an invaluable training, a self-reliant spirit, needing only a chance to get himself established as a farmer or in some other vocation.

It seems to me that during recent years when so many people have been discouraged and uncertain of the course to pursue, that we are justified in placing a high value on anything that will challenge the best that is in young people to make their own opportunities and to get along on their own ability.